

How to Become a Teacher as a Career Changer or Recent College Graduate

Deciding to become a teacher even though you didn't think about it in college can be a daunting task. Perhaps you've heard from friends that you might as well forget it. There is just too much hassle.

Well, Maryland has worked hard in the past few years to open some doors just for you and for others like you who may have decided to change careers or who have just graduated from college and find you now wish to teach. Maybe you are in the armed forces and due to separate from the service and begin to "serve again", as the Troops to Teachers motto suggests. You have come to the right place as Maryland has many programs from which to choose.

If you already have a bachelor's degree, you are ready to begin looking at choices. In Maryland, you will need to have a Master's degree, or the equivalent of a Master's degree, within ten years of receiving your initial certification. Given that fact, you may want to enroll in a program that concludes with both your certification (your license to teach) and a master's degree! You might start your search for the perfect fit by reviewing the list of Maryland Approved Programs (MAP) at the following link, <http://directory.msde.state.md.us/map/LocalFrames.asp>. You will want to type in the search box the area for which you will want to seek certification – what you want to teach. That search will give you a listing of all of Maryland's programs, but you will be looking for those colleges and universities that offer the Master's of Arts in Teaching, or the MAT. There will also be telephone numbers and links for you to access a real person to see if a particular program interests you. These programs may be full time, or may be offered on a part-time basis, and are really all over the state.

However, your available time – or your available funds for immediate use – may be limited and you are seeking a more direct, and less expensive route, to acquiring that license you desire. The Maryland Approved Alternative Preparation Program (MAAPP) option may better suit your needs. A listing of all MAAPPs can be found at www.tttmaryland.org by clicking on Maryland Approved Alternative Preparation Program Directory. When you open the directory, you will find a listing of all of the programs offered across the state that enable you to acquire initial certification through alternative means. Now, some of these programs will require you to complete a master's degree as a part of the course of study. They will be the same cost as programs you found on the MAP listing. However, you will receive what is called the Resident Teacher Certificate early on in the program, and will be entitled to teach with a fully recognized license. So, you are teaching – and getting paid as a teacher with full benefits – while you are completing the master's degree. For the most part, the programs in partnership with a four-year college or university fall into this category.

Some MAAPPs are less costly and provide a quicker entry into teaching with fewer requirements for program completion. You will see several programs in partnership with a community college or a private provider such as The New Teacher Project or Teach for America, or programs offered by school systems themselves. These programs do not include post-employment coursework that may conclude with the degree; however, all programs to require post-employment training during the first one or two years. In all cases, the applicant – you – will receive the Resident Teacher Certificate and will be eligible to teach in the schools in the county that is shown as the partner on the listing of programs.

What does this partnership business mean? Well, MAAPPs are very specific to a school system. As you look at the list, you will see that each program lists partners. If a particular program seems to suit you because of your location relative to the program location, or you know someone who completed the program, please understand that the ability to be hired as a teacher is specific to the county school system listed as a partner in that program. For example, you could not decide that you would like to work with The New Teacher Project in acquiring your certification unless you enroll in the two specific programs offered in the state – one in Prince George’s County Public Schools, and one in Baltimore City Public School System. If you are intent on teaching in Howard County, only one program exists in partnership with Howard Community College.

You may now be wondering what qualifications you need to have to get into one of these kinds of programs. To enroll in a MAT program (remember the first list of programs you looked at, the MAP list), you will need to have a bachelor’s degree and meet the college or university entrance requirements in terms of grade point average. If you are at the point of considering such a move, you will want to contact the institution directly and discuss your various options.

If you are more inclined toward the MAAPP (alternative route), begin by looking at your own undergraduate transcript because these programs require a bachelor’s degree, as well. Look at those courses that are clearly named the subject you think you want to teach. Can you locate 30 hours of the content you would like to teach? Can you locate 24 hours with six hours of related coursework that might count toward that content? If you think you want to teach elementary school, look for six credits each of math, English, science and social studies (including at least 3 credits of history or geography). If you add up your grades in that content area, and you have a 2.75 GPA in the area for which you will seek certification, you have met one requirement for many of the programs. Some programs may require a 3.0 in that content area, but some do not. Both the MAP and the MAAPP require internships – supervised experiences in the classrooms with kids – prior to entering the profession. All programs will offer mentoring and support.

Maybe transcript analysis is not your strong suit. That is okay, too, because your program provider will most certainly assist you in this. The “do-it-yourself” approach just gives you a chance to make an educated guess as to where you may stand when you meet with your program provider.

One thing is certain for all programs – MAP or MAAPP. **You will need to demonstrate basic skills competencies through the Praxis I, SAT, GRE, or ACT.** These tests measure competency in mathematics, reading and writing. There are no exceptions. If you are serious about teaching, begin by meeting Maryland's basic skills requirement. Click on the following link to see information about basic skills testing: http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/division/certification_branch/testing_information/praxis1

Maryland is working hard to provide an online opportunity for those not already located in the state. At this time, there are no programs offered in Maryland. We hope that will change very soon.

Meanwhile, good luck in your search. Please do not hesitate to contact the Maryland State Department of Education with any questions you may have. Our contact information is located on the Home Page.